

Closing salesman's secret weapon

In the world of sales, it is the "closing" that reflects success. The salesperson who has high closing ratios is well prepared, knows about human psychology, and, perhaps, has read *The Sales Closing Book* by Gerhard Gschwandtner.

This book — self-published by the author and available for \$99, from Personal Selling Power, P.O. Box 5467, Fredericksburg, Va. (800-752-7355) — is provided in a loose-leaf, three-ring binder and has 16 tabbed chapters, each covering a different approach to the closing. Scripted scenarios provide a wealth of responses to virtually any customer's objection.

The book outlines 270 sales closings altogether and is surprisingly instructive for non-salespeople as well.

Here are some of my favorites from the many closings presented:

■ **The story close.** The psychological powers of story-telling have influenced mankind for eons. Stories are at once disarming and captivating, and, for the astute salesperson, they allow fictional characters to do the actual closing. An example of an effective story



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teller/salesperson is Ronald Reagan.

The persuasion close. With the viewpoint that customers buy products to fulfill their perceived needs and dreams, salespeople should be seen as "dream merchants." This close shows prospects how their dreams will come true if they buy your product or service, and how nightmares will become reality if they don't.

■ **The summary close.** While amateur salespeople may regard the summary close as a time to list everything great about their product, the seasoned salesperson will close by closely matching benefits to the buyer's specific needs.

■ **The alternative close.** This type of close offers the prospect a variety of minor choices throughout the sales presentation. This habit of choosing between alternatives is rewarded with positive

feedback, right up to the final closing question. At that point, the closing is made, regardless of which alternative is picked.

■ **The negotiation close.** Every sale is a negotiation between value and price. To create a win-win situation with a customer, the book provided the following kinds of tips: have a respectful attitude, allow customers to design their solutions, be fair and tough, maintain power through confidence, and be prepared with negotiating tactics.

■ **The direct close.** It's a mistake, according to the author, to think a customer always knows what's best for his or her business. The salesperson can sway a buyer by showing the value of a new opportunity and closing directly, without hesitation.

The other chapters describe the Trial Close, The "Yes-Set" Close, The Price Close, The Analogy Close, The Suggestion Close, The Assumptive Close, and the Objection Close.

Each of the 16 chapters starts with a cartoon illustration of the close, and proceeds with an elaborate description of the situation in

which it is best used. Finally, summary pages with the hundreds of suggested techniques for the salesperson to memorize are presented.

On the downside, viewing the closing from 16 different approaches can be a bit overwhelming. But it's worth the effort. The successful salesperson, who should be always analyzing the spoken and unspoken signals from the prospect, needs an arsenal of resources from which to tailor his or her close.

■ **The Bottom Line.** The *Sales Closing Book* is a valuable reference book, not only for salespeople, but for anyone who encounters salespeople in a business situation regularly. Understanding the techniques presented will make you a better negotiator, even if you are on the other side of the fence.

Hillel Segal's column includes evaluations of gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.